



More Time and Options Should be Given for Affordable Housing Policy

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, November 03, 2008

Last week, I visited the Rules committee to present a **memo** that Councilmember Constant and I wrote asking that the Council hold off on adopting a citywide Inclusionary Housing policy.

I first blogged on this topic on December 17, 2007 in a post titled **"Coming Soon: Affordable Housing Citywide."** The Council is set to vote on Inclusionary Housing on Dec 9. The proposed policy would mandate that 20-25 percent of all new housing in San Jose be priced below market rate. If the Council adopts such a policy it may raise the price on the market-rate units, which squeezes the middle class. It also may affect the home resale values down the road. There were two other councilmembers (besides myself and Constant) who opposed pursuing this policy during our current housing meltdown.

As you may know, San Jose is and has been the leader in affordable housing. While other cities have done little for affordable housing, San Jose has gone above and beyond. San Jose continues to build housing while falling behind in funding for our basic services. Affordable housing does not pay property tax, park fees or building fees.

The San Jose/Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) goal was to build 26,114 units of housing in San Jose between 1996-2006. We actually built (drum roll) 30,572! (Plus we converted our tax base away by converting industrial land for housing.) Overall San Jose built 30,572 units of housing, of which more than a third are affordable—10,451 to be exact.

The Council has been led to believe that ABAG has authority in mandating that San Jose build housing. ABAG has no legal authority over San Jose's land use. I am not quite sure why San Jose takes marching orders from ABAG. One would think that San Jose would instead do what is right for San Jose.

At the Rules Committee last week, we asked that Council have the opportunity to check in regarding this topic before there is a final vote so we can see what staff has compiled so far. The last time the Council discussed this issue was in June. I am appreciative that the Rules Committee supported having a special meeting on Nov. 10 at 1PM so that our memo could be heard by the Council.

The Rules Committee also discussed how the Housing Department chose to conduct outreach. The Housing Department spent the past four months having one-on-one meetings with affordable housing advocates and affordable housing developers. A few of these stakeholder meetings were open to the public—for those who knew about them. The outreach seems a bit backwards because the biggest stakeholders are the San Jose residents, but not much outreach has been done for them. Only now, after all the stakeholders have had input, is the Housing Department holding community meetings.

Last Tuesday night, I heard in passing that a community meeting was scheduled for residents feedback. This meeting is scheduled a mile from my home and was going to occur in less than a week. However, as the elected representative, I was not notified in advance and neither was Councilmember Constant. City staff shared that they sent the notice out to staff and others. This person missed my point which was that all councilmembers should be included with all outreach. I carry my BlackBerry so that I can be instantly notified. Not including Councilmembers on a simple e-mail builds distrust.

On October 31, I received a memo via email from City Manager Debra Figone that shared that moving forward, notices of all community meetings will be sent out via email or by a phone call to the councilperson. In addition, all community meetings will be listed on the city managers weekly report which is delivered via email to Councilmembers. Bravo to the City Manager on improving the process!

Meeting dates and times are as follows:

Nov. 3, Willow Glen Library, 6-8pm
Nov. 6, Edenvale Library, 6-8pm
Nov. 10, City Hall, 1-3pm & 6-8pm
Nov. 12, Berryessa Library, 6-8pm

Residents from Almaden Valley, Alum Rock, Cambrian, Evergreen and West San Jose will unfortunately need to drive across town.

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